

THE VOICE AND VISION FOR VAPT

NOVEMBER 2004

EDITOR: William G. Carr

A Message from our president,



Velera Gammons

I am sure many of you who provide a school bus service have already faced a variety of problems and unexpected events since school started. We may easily get caught up in other issues that can cause us to lose focus on our primary purpose of providing a safe transportation service to the children in the commonwealth. There is one thing that is certain.... Our jobs are not boring. No matter what my plans are for the day, invariably the schedule seems to change the minute I get in the car and turn on the two-way radio or pick up the phone. Why just the other day while on my way to work I heard several drivers exchanging information via the two-way radio that a young man was throwing objects at school buses and had hit one as it passed so I headed to the location. To make a long story short, while I was investigating the incident a middle school aged child who had provided me information darted out in front of a passing motorist and was saved by only a few inches. I came away from that investigation with a fresh reminder of just how involved we are in the lives of so many children and how quickly an accident can happen, especially when we are dealing with children. Those of us in the field of pupil transportation have an awesome responsibility. Thank God for that "reality check" that reminded me to always be alert and to remember my main purpose in this job – to protect children!

I have the good fortune to know quite a few Transportation professionals throughout Virginia and I truly respect these people and what is required of them.

The week of October 17 – 23 was National School Bus Safety Week and I hope you all took the opportunity to “get the word out.” We cannot forget that the unexpected happens, therefore, we need to stay alert and be prepared. Emphasizing to parents, school administrators, and the general public needs to be more than just telling people of the importance of safety in transporting children. We need to provide them with information and articles that will give them guidelines to promote school bus safety in this state. We have a duty to encourage our school division to train students in school bus safety and to continue reminding our drivers, as well. Possibly, during the regional director meetings ideas could be shared how VAPT can make a difference in promoting school bus safety in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The VAPT Board and committees continue to work diligently to provide an informative and timely conference. I would like to express my thanks to the following members for accepting positions on the following committees:

James Lash	Audit	York County
Michael Puckett	Legislative	Russell County
Buddy Nelson	Position Papers	Chesapeake
Donna Carter	Procedural Manual	Franklin County

As VAPT continues to grow and stands with VDOE in providing information and support, all of us need to be actively involved. We are looking for a member who is willing to become the official VAPT photographer, especially during the conference. James Hinson and Mitch Fenton need someone to help them with the Technicians' workshops. Tim Parker is looking for someone to be the Web Curator. If you are interested in either of these positions please contact a VAPT Board member and let them know.

Thanksgiving is just around the corner and most of us are looking forward to the break AND plenty of good food and fellowship. The VAPT Board and Committee Chairpersons hope you have a wonderful, healthy and relaxing holiday break!!

NEWS from the U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration 11-04

August 25, 2004

North Carolina drivers now will be able to get up-to-the minute information about local road and traffic conditions by calling 511, Federal Highway Administrator Mary E. Peters and state highway officials announced today.

The new system, called "511" after the number drivers can dial for the information, is available statewide starting today. The new system allows callers to gather the latest information about traffic jams, road construction and alternative routes in and around the state. The North Carolina 511 system also will provide the latest train and ferry information.

"People's lives don't have to be put on hold by unexpected traffic jams and delays," said Peters. "Starting today, North Carolina's drivers can make one phone call and get the information they need to be on time for their jobs, their errands and, most importantly, their families."

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) provided a \$100,000 grant to help North Carolina develop its 511 service.

Peters said DOT is encouraging all 50 states to establish 511 systems. Twenty-one 511 systems are currently up and running in other parts of the country. In some of those areas, as much as 97 percent of drivers who use 511 say they have changed their travel routes because of the information provided.

The first 511 service was launched in the Cincinnati metropolitan area in 2001. With 511 service now available in North Carolina, almost 25 percent of the U.S. population lives in areas covered by a 511 system. By the end of 2005, half the population is expected to have access to the travel information service.

More information about 511 and national traffic and road closure information is available on the FHWA Web site at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficinfo/index.htm>.

NEWS from the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services

www.NASDPTS.ORG

NAPT and NASDPTS Collaborate on School Bus Safety PSA

The National Association of State Director of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) and National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) have teamed up to create a 30-second Public Service Announcement (PSA) to remind motorists to stop for a school bus with red flashing lamps.

The PSA was created as an "evergreen" spot, which means that it can be used anytime, all year long, whenever a radio station has programming time to fill.

While the PSA credits the "School Bus Information Council (a joint venture between NASDPTS and NAPT), as the sponsor of the message, radio stations and other users can customize the ending with a personalized footnote, such as, "Brought to you by the (your state) Department of Education", since it was created in MP2 file format.

The PSA is available via download from www.naspdts.org. Simply go to the News Center on the home page and click on SBIC Radio PSA. Please note that your PC must have an audio player (i.e. Windows Media Player or RealPlayer) that supports MP3 files to download this message.

If cars driving pass a stopped school bus is a problem in your community, we encourage you to contact your local radio station(s) – feel free to simply forward this email to them – and encourage them to download and use the message.

We hope this is something you will find valuable and encourage you to be on the lookout for additional information from NAPT and NASDPTS and the School Bus Information Council that will help promote school bus safety.

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The School Bus Information Council announced that the late-September 12th Annual Family Day held at Dulles International Airport outside of Washington DC raised \$100,000 for the Special Olympics of Virginia. (Ref. Oct 2004 VAPT newsletter article)

The School Bus Information Council was one of the major sponsors of the event, and that sponsorship was possible only through the generosity of Blue Bird, IC Corporation and Thomas Built Buses.

NEWS from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

The Number of Persons That Can Safely Sit on a School Bus Seat
Federal regulation does not specify the number of persons that can sit on a school bus seat. The school bus manufacturers determine the maximum seating capacity of a school bus. The manufacturers use this number, which is based on sitting three small elementary school age persons per typical 39 inch school bus seat, in the calculations for determining the gross vehicle weight rating and the number of emergency exits. School transportation providers generally determine the number of persons that they can safely fit into a school bus seat. Generally they fit three smaller elementary school age persons or two adult high school age persons into a typical 39-inch school bus seat.

NHTSA recommends that all passengers be seated entirely within the confines of the school bus seats while the bus is in motion. Federal motor vehicle safety standard No. 222, "School Bus Passenger Seating and Crash Protection" requires that the interior of large buses provide occupant protection so that children are protected without the need to buckle-up. Occupant crash protection is provided by a protective envelope consisting of strong, closely-spaced seats that have energy-absorbing seat backs. Person not sitting or sitting partially outside of the

school bus seats will not be afforded the occupant protection provided by the school bus seats.

Derek Graham, North Carolina Director of Pupil Transportation wrote to inform us of the recent death of Greg Bridgeman. He was just recently diagnosed with cancer.

Greg was vice president and general manager of Specialty Manufacturing Company. He came to work with Specialty over 14 years ago.

Year after year state directors have been greeted by Greg and others from Specialty at the Friday night NASDPTS dinners. Derek remembers how welcome Greg made him feel the first time he attended a meeting. Greg was not only a professional and respected member of our industry, but a genuinely nice guy who will be greatly missed.

The family asks that anyone who wishes to send gifts or cards to please send them to Christ United Methodist Church at 3415 Union Road, Gastonia, NC 28056.

<<<REGION III DIRECTOR'S MEETING>>>

The meeting was held on October 7, 2004 in Spotsylvania County with thirteen members in attendance.

Last school year's driver wage and benefit survey was distributed and discussed. A new survey will be sent out for this year. The information in the survey should be useful in budget preparation.

June Eanes on behalf of DOE provided information on the following subjects:

1. DOE has obtained a grant for the Special Needs Symposium. It is not yet known where the symposium will be held.
2. DOE has additional school bus safety poster calendars for anyone who requests them.
3. Dianne Busch is no longer with DOE and anyone who has questions regarding school bus driver training should contact June.
4. The training position at DOE will be posted shortly. Each division director should receive a copy.
5. The Transportation Report will not be due until it can be done using the web.
6. School bus specifications are going to the Board for approval in October.
7. DOE has hired a procurement director to relieve June of some of her responsibilities related to purchasing.

Brief discussions were held concerning the following topics:

- Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation
- Regional Road-e-o. Each division that has a regional rodeo invited other school divisions in the region to attend.

- Problems we all deal with, specifically school bus driver shortage, walk to school policies, school bus passes, alternate pick-up and drop-off stops, and policies in general. We discussed our various school division policies with a focus on the positive rather than negative results of the policies. We found we all have similar problems but did not always address them in the same manner.
- Low attendance at the regional meetings. One reason we agreed may contribute to the low attendance is due to the proximity of Spotsylvania County to the other school divisions.

Submitted by –
Kermit Shaffer, Spotsylvania Co

NEWS RELEASE from the Associated Press about an advisory from the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION that school leaders should be aware of people that may be spying on schools or school buses.

The Education Department has advised school leaders nationwide to watch for people spying on their buildings or buses to help detect any possibility of terrorism like the deadly school siege in Russia.

The warning follows an analysis by the FBI (news – web sites) and the Homeland Security Department of the siege that killed nearly 340 people, many of them students, in the city of Beslan in September, 2004.

"The horror of this attack may have created significant anxiety in our own country among parents, students, faculty staff and other community members," Deputy Education Secretary Eugene Hickok said in a letter to schools and education groups.

The safety advice is based on lessons learned from the Russia incident. But there is "no specific information indicating that there is a terrorist threat to any schools or universities in the United States," Hickok said.

Federal law enforcement officials also have encouraged local police to stay in contact with school officials and have encouraged reporting of suspicious activities, the letter says.

In particular, schools were told to watch for activities that may be legitimate on their own, but may suggest a heightened terrorist's threat if many of them occur.

Among those activities:

- Interest in obtaining site plans for schools, bus routes and attendance lists;

- Prolonged “static surveillance” by people disguised as panhandlers, shoe shiners, newspaper or flower vendors or street sweepers not previously seen in the area;
- Observations of security drills;
- People staring at or quickly looking away from employees or vehicles as they enter or leave parking areas;
- Foot surveillance of campuses involving individuals working together.

The effort is the latest by the Education Department and other federal agencies to encourage school officials to maintain and practice a plan for responding to emergencies.

After the terrorist takeover of the Russian school, President Bush (news – web sites) asked his top advisers to review their strategies for dealing with hostage situations, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge has said.

The federal government is advising schools to take many steps to improve the security of their buildings. Those include installing locks for all doors and windows, having a single entry point into buildings and ensuring they can reach school bus drivers in an emergency.

The education Department sent its letter by e-mail to school police, state school officers, school boards, groups representing principals and many other organizations.

The Homeland Security Department also sent a bulletin to federal, state and local emergency officials to provide fresh guidance based on the review of the school siege in Russia.

The most destructive habit.....	Worry
The greatest loss.....	Loss of self-respect
The ugliest personality trait.....	Selfishness
Our greatest natural resource.....	Our youth
The greatest “shot in the arm”.....	Encouragement
The greatest problem to overcome.....	Fear

NATIONAL DRIVER REGISTER

400 7TH Street, SW., Room 6124A (NPO-124)
Washington, DC 20590-0001
(202) 366-4800

The National Driver Register (NDR) is a central repository of information on individuals whose privilege to drive has been revoked, suspended, canceled or denied or who have been convicted of serious traffic-related offenses. The records maintained at the NDR consist of identification information including name, date of birth, gender, driver license number, and reporting State. All of the substantive information,

the reason for the suspension or conviction and associated dates, resides in the reporting State.

State Driver Licensing officials query the NDR to determine if an individual's license or privilege has been withdrawn by any other State. Other authorized users have access to NDR for transportation safety purposes. All 50 States and the District of Columbia participate in the NDR. The system is also referred to as the Problem Driver Pointer System (PDPS).

How to obtain Information from the National Driver Register

1. Who Is Legally Authorized To Receive Information From The NDR?

- Any individual under the provisions of the Privacy Act.
- State and federal driver's license officials.
- Current or prospective employers of motor vehicles operators.
- Air Carriers for Pilot Applicants
- The Federal Railroad Administration and employers of railroad engineers.
- The Federal Aviation Administration for airmen medical certification.
- The U.S. Coast Guard for merchant mariner certification.
- The National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Highway Administration for Accident Investigations.

2. If You Are An Employer Of Motor Vehicle Operators

As part of your safety program, you may request an NDR file check on a current or prospective employee if they are seeking employment or are employed as a driver. The employee may go to the local motor vehicle agency and ask for an NDR file check. This form should be submitted to the state in which the employee is licensed. Any information you receive from the NDR should be made available to the employee. If you receive information from the NDR indicating that an individual is on file, you will be provided with the name of the State, the address and telephone number in order to request a copy of the driver record to verify that it is the same individual. Any information on the NDR file that was reported by the States during the past 3-years will be disclosed.

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- Department of Motor Vehicles
Driver Licensing & Information Division
P.O. Box 27412
Richmond, VA 23269

4. The names of our neighboring State Motor Vehicle Agencies are provided below:

- DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Bureau of Motor Vehicles Services
Traffic Records and Rehab Branch
301 C Street, NW.
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 727-6761
- KENTUCKY
Department of Vehicle Regulation
Division of Driver Licensing
State Office Building, 2nd Floor
Frankfort, KY 40622
(502) 564-6800
- MARYLAND
Motor Vehicle Administration
Division of Driver Records
6601 Ritchie Highway, NE.
Glen Burnie, MD 21062
(410) 768-7659
- NORTH CAROLINA
Division of Motor Vehicles
Driver License Division
1100 New Bern Avenue
Raleigh, NC 27697
- TENNESSEE
Department of Safety
Driver Control Division
1150 Foster Avenue
Nashville, TN 37210
- WEST VIRGINIA
Department of Motor Vehicles
Driver Improvement Division
1800 Washington Street, East
Charleston, WV 25317

Please contact Tim Parker at Tim.Parker@fcps.edu, ASAP if you are interested or know of someone who would be willing to serve as VAPT's Web Site Curator.
VAPT Website: www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Finance/VAPT

NEWS from the Nation

- The NTSB has released its updated list of Most Wanted Safety Improvements by the States. The list highlights recommendations that, if implemented, NTSB believes will have a significant impact on reducing deaths and injuries. This year's most wanted list makes 10 recommendations under the following six categories: Improve Child Occupant Protection; Enact Primary Seat Belt Enforcement Laws, Promote Youth Highway Safety; Eliminate Hard Core Drinking Driving; Enhance Recreational Boating Safety; and School Bus/Grade Crossing Safety.
- Coordination of Transit and School Busing in Iowa Iowa State University' Center for Transportation research and Education has released a report that examines coordinated transit management and maintenance systems in the area of school transportation and other forms of public transportation.
- Kids at the Crossroads: A National Survey of Physical Environment and Motorist Behavior at Intersections in School Zones.
- The National SAFE KIDS Campaign and FedEx Express have released an observational study that examines conditions at signalized intersections near elementary and middle schools.
- New TRB subcommittee on School Transportation A new Transportation Research Board (TRB) subcommittee on School Transportation has been formed within TRB's Transportation Safety Management Committee. This is the first time school bus transportation has been formally recognized as a separate transportation discipline by the prestigious TRB.

Jeff Tsai, director of the Pupil Transportation Group at the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE), spearheaded this initiative which will focus on issues that impact the safety, security, health and quality of school travel.

"There are money issues related to school travel that need to be addressed more cohesively," said Tsai. "Previously, school travel was addressed by separate groups but this isn't a topic that can be dealt with from a single point of view." Tsai serves as co-chair of the committee along with Dr. Doug Robertson, director

of the University at North Carolina's Highway Safety Research Center (HRSC) in Chapel Hill.

The subcommittee will meet once a year at the TRB Annual Meeting held in Washington, D.C. The first meeting was in January 2004 and included 30 participants with backgrounds in architecture, public health, transportation safety and research.

VAPT HISTORY



1979 OFFICERS

President:	Bob Wilson, Washington County
President-Elect:	Roy Hopkins, Louisa County
Secretary:	Jack Jones, Chesterfield County
Treasurer:	Earl Stanley, Virginia Beach

DIRECTORS

Jules Jackson	Newport News
Robert Devers, Jr.	Loudoun County
Richard Quesenberry	Montgomery County
John Mothershead	Henrico County

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Auditing	Jules Jackson, Newport News
Constitution/Bylaws	Warren Littleton, Virginia Beach
Legislative	Nathan Young, Henrico County
Membership	Roy Hopkins, Louisa County
Resolutions	Bob Wilson, Washington County
Nominating	Bob Lilly, Giles County

The Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation held its Third Annual Conference on October 14-16, 1979, at the Martha Washington Inn, Abingdon, Virginia. Mr. Clarence Clarke with International Harvester hosted a social hour and also provided 25 tickets for members and wives to attend the Barter Theater.

Various Workshops covered Fuel Conversation, School Bus Ridership, Fuel Acquisition, and A Round House Discussion. The keynote speaker was The Honorable William L. Lemon, member of the Virginia House of Delegates. Maintenance Personnel met at the Washington County School Bus Garage and had a hands-on gasoline engine tuning session during the time they met. Supervisors toured the engine tuning demonstration at the garage. Mr. Gillespie gave an up-to-date on what was happening at the state level in pupil transportation. He mentioned that pupil behavior on school buses had caused a few accidents during the school year and encouraged local authorities to take action to stop the unacceptable behavior of children riding school buses. He discussed some changes in the 1980 specifications of school buses, and discussed problems that people were having with the road speed control. Mr. Gillespie provided the dates and locations where workshops were set up to instruct mechanics on the installation of stop-arm signs. Also, mentioned was application had been made for federal funds to pay for 1000 stop-arm signs. The State Department of Education requested an additional 6.3 million dollars for the 1980-1982 Budget for pupil transportation. He closed the session with a question and answer period. Entertainment at the banquet was provided Bluegrass and "Flatfootin" with banjos and guitars.



HAPPY THANKSGIVING